

Politeia
Acta Duorum:
Zachariah
Jonathan L. Wright

Weeks passed, months. Slowly what had happened became obscured by newer waves of current events, though its sediment always remained in the back of our minds. Archonos resigned as Chairman and 37th member of the High Council, replaced by Chairlady Herata, the former General-Secretary of Education. And as the days grew longer and warmer, the Summer Birthing season soon began; slowly our female colleagues began to disappear, discreetly retiring to the Maternity Wards.

The person discussed in the last chapter and his following was no longer spoken of. The Expounders made no further mention of what had happened, and the news no longer referenced it. The High Council had decided, probably correctly, that it was easier to kill an idea by surrounding it with silence, than by covering it with vitriol. In the Halls of Politeia Square, though, Joshua did, indeed, live a strange kind of afterlife. Keeping him dead had become the implicit objective of many of the Agencies.

As for myself, I was assigned a series of routine duties for a while until finally summoned back before the Commission to undertake a new expeditionary assignment.

“Hail Politeia”

“Hail Politeia”

“This, the 1,987th plenary session of the Commission on Agricultural Disputes, will be brought to order. The honorable Commissioner Xenophon G-103169 presiding,”

“Thank you Caecilius. Now that the formalities have been scrupulously adhered to we will commence today’s business, if that’s proper.”

“Yes, sir, after the salutation and call to order, the chief Commissioner directs business on his initiative,” another commissioner affirmed, looking up from a book on parliamentary etiquette.

“Good. Well, well, Administrator Klinias, I apologize that the Commission hasn’t summed you to its presence recently. We haven’t had a situation that has required your...unique talents.”

“Any work that serves the good of Politeia is noble work, sir, even the menial clerical assignments during the past few weeks, while unglamorous, contribute in some way to the common good.”

“A very eloquent answer. Sounds like something directly out of the Book of Nomoi. But to the subject at hand – we do have need of you again. I assume you are aware that Patriarch Jeremiah of Ben-Ankara has recently passed away.”

“Yes, I heard about it. I knew Jeremiah, somewhat, though we had never worked closely with each other.” I paused. “The man was an institution though -- I don’t remember a time when he wasn’t Patriarch of Ben-Ankara.”

“He lived a good 77 years, extraordinary longevity for an iron. The Executive Board has finished their seven-day period of mourning and deliberation. Tomorrow Zachariah I-042220 will be installed as the new patriarch. We would like you to represent the central government there, and present him with the confirmation of his Patriarchate from the High Council.”

“Permission to speak freely, Commissioner,”

“Aahh, well... I’m feeling lucky today, what is it you want to get off your chest, Klinias?”

“This is punishment isn’t it? You resent that I co-operated with the HC when they sidestepped you on the Joshua matter. And you’re probably not too happy with all the negative light it shed on Provincian affairs. You know as well as I that I had no choice in the matter.”

“You had no choice but you could have resisted a little more in favor of the Commission in front of the High Council. You didn’t have to go so willingly. And, furthermore, you could have done something to soften the blow to our prestige by the late affair. But that is all behind us. The chair would now like to recognize Commissioner Diotima.”

“Klinias,” the female official spoke to me, in a soft, self-consciously consoling tone, “This is not a mere symbolic or ceremonial mission. Zachariah is a rising star among the Provincian hierarchy. Though he stresses the need to reform relations between metropolitan Politeia and the settlements, he emphasizes that he wants to do this in a legal, Doctrinal context that would preserve the Institutions. He is also a strict anti-Joshuaite.”

“The High Council believes,” Xenophon interjected, “that he could be a bridge; someone who might fulfill the iron’s desire for change, without rejecting the Doctrine. He could become a strong counter-point to the lingering Joshuaite influence. You see the importance, therefore, of engaging him, understanding what exactly he believes and establishing a mutually beneficial relationship,”

“Frankly, sir, that actually appeals to me. Attending an Investiture ceremony, conducting some political interviews ... it all seems unlikely to envelop my life in another national crisis. Might actually be fun.”

“I’m glad you feel that way. Well, if that’s all, we’ll progress to the next order of business. Administrator Augustus’ fact finding mission to the north about bird seed...”

I exited the Hall of Domestic Affairs and strode casually passed the Politeian Tower to the Transportation Bureau headquarters. It was a bright, cloudless day: the pure blue dome of sky above a sparkling white city underneath. I was actually quite relieved. I realized that the Commission was trying to get back at me, and that I could probably expect more “retributory” assignments over the next few months, but I really didn’t care. Just then it occurred to me; something I had never realized before. I could think of today as the first day of the rest of my life. The great crisis had passed. I could look forward to a life of relatively facile and benign missions as I getting older, eventually retire and then rest peacefully in the Garden of the Fallen. What was there left for me to worry about? How could I have been so wrong?

After scheduling Fredrik, I swung by the RF to pick up some effects, and the background papers on my new assignment that the CAD inevitably would have left at my bed. On the portico I stopped and met with an old friend.

“Hey, Megalus, how you doing?”

“Hi Klinias, fine. I heard they finally got you a real assignment, where you heading this time?”

“South...and it isn’t much of a real job, they just want me to attend the new Patriarch of Ben-Ankara’s Investiture ceremony,”

“Sounds like a push over,”

“Yeah, I think they meant it to be an insult, but I’m not concerned. It’ll be good to get back out into the country again, and this time I won’t have to do much work.”

“Sweet, they got me out doing preparedness exercises in the Beth-Sheba plains. Damn waste of time.”

“Heh, yeah. Well say hello to Diana and Cassandra for me,”

“All right, see you when you get back,”

Refreshed by the friendly conversation, I casually past the familiar Cafetarium up through the curtained wall into the vast Dormatorium. There weren’t too many people there, it was passed Morning Meal Hour, but it wasn’t deserted; two or three dozen people going about, like me, on errands back and forth for the Agencies. I stopped at my bed, and found the compartment at its foot occupied by a large bundle of CAD documents. I got those out and layed them on my bed.

“Hello, Klinias, going somewhere?” I heard Diana’s soft voice behind me.

“Nothing special, they just want me to stand around and watch a ceremony, and then tell them what I saw. It takes seventeen years of experience to do that properly.” I turned around to face her.

“Ben-Ankara? I heard their patriarch just died.”

“Yep, the mourning period is over, and they already got the guy they want to replace him. Some EB member named Zachariah, who they can’t stop talking about.”

“Why can’t they stop talking about him? Too lenient on the, uh, ‘movement’?”

“No, they think he’s going to be this great anti-Joshua, with all the rhetoric and none of the subversion. Wishful thinking if you ask me.” I didn’t mind saying the J word.

“Well, nothing can be as bad as your last adventure. The one that made you famous,”

“More like infamous, I still hate it when people recognize me,” I slid the stack of documents into my brief case, and grabbed a travel satchel that held some routine supplies. “Well, I guess I’ll see you in a few days, take care of yourself,”

“You take care too, Klinias.”

I met Frederik over at the BUTT stables where he was grooming a fine looking black horse for the journey to Provincia. I slid my baggage in through the window and greeted him.

“Hello, Frederick,” He turned his head slightly in my direction.

“Good day, sir,”

“Are you excited about going back into the countryside?” He tilted head and elbow in an ambivalent gesture.

“I guess so; life gets boring in Politeia after awhile.”

“Ha, well I’ll be ready and waiting whenever you’re done.” He looked down.

“Alright, sir,”

En route to Ben-Ankara, I reviewed the information about the new Patriarch. Born in 5970 Post-Foundation, he had a remarkably unremarkable career. Just missing bronze, the ISD felt he was virtuous enough to be included in that higher stratum of irons who become patriarchs and executive board members. Once out of the Ben-Hadath STF he was assigned a non-voting seat at several EBs around Provincia, until a permanent spot opened up at Ben-Ankara when he was 26. He has distinguished himself as a loyal member of the iron aristocracy, and an early opponent of Joshuaitism. He has often denounced perceived iniquities in the Provincial-metropolitan relationship – a fact that has made him very popular with certain elements in Provincia. While he does not always

have an entirely correct understanding of the Doctrine, he always puts his rhetoric in Doctrinal language; for instance, by arguing that his suggested reforms would be more in accordance with the Book of Nomoi than the status quo.

The Commission also gave me a lot of information about the productivity of Ben-Ankara, the poultry raising methods, and how some of Zachariahs ideas and innovations have been put into practice. I glanced through the pages of graphs and statistics, and then tossed the paperwork over onto the seat beside me. “Well, I guess he’s done better than the majority of irons that get put on the Executive Boards. Most just seem to think that EB member-ship is a free pass to do nothing.”

CHAPTER 2

Night was dawning over the village as we entered Ben-Ankara. Bright hues of red and orange competed with pitch-blackness for the dominance of the landscape. I hauled my tired body out of the carriage, and surveyed the scene around me – irons feeding turkeys and chickens in their coops, people getting ready for the Investiture ceremony, the occasional blue shirted silver, probably a physician or PIMF man.

I wandered for a moment through the town, looking for my colleague, who, for some reason, was absent from the traditional hailing place. Whilst I was searching, some instinct told me to look directly behind myself; I obeyed, and then stopped, petrified by the vision before me.

It was a completely ordinary, yet strange, sight to behold – for a moment the sun had been replaced by a shadow, and it was as if all the magnificent hues of dusk were radiating from this black shape. The shape advanced towards me, as I stood motionless; slowly, the shapes true colors were revealed by its own rays, and it showed itself not to be a black shadow, but a red clad man.

“Hello, I’m Patriarch Zachariah,” he smiled “Or at least I will be in a few hours. You must be Klinias -- good to meet you” I remembered I had some kind of duty here.

“Oh, yes, uh...yes, I am Klinias S-112263. I’m here to officiate and attend your Investiture as a representative of the CAD, and the central government, generally. Do we have to identify or...”

“No. No need to go through all that, I trust you are who you say you are. Do you have any bags or luggage that you need taken from your carriage?”

“Yeah, just a couple of things, I’ll have my driver call some of the irons to...”

“No bother...” To my surprise Zachariah casually went up to my carriage and took out two large briefcases himself. As he was doing this Fredrik shot him a questioning look.

“And what’s your name, sir?” Zachariah asked.

“You want to know...my name?” the driver responded suspiciously “Why?”

“Well, how else can I invite you to eat with Klinias and me after I finish putting these bags up?” Frederik glanced over at me, as if looking for orders in an unfamiliar situation. I nodded quickly.

“I...” the driver smiled “I would be delighted. My names Frederik.”

“Good to meet you, Frederik. Now, you wait here, and I’ll be right back.”

“What about the carriage?”

“Would you mind -- if I had a driver take it into the Ben-Ankara garage, it’s just over the next corner” the driver seemed conflicted for a moment, not in the habit of letting anyone, let alone an unknown iron, take his vehicle.

“O...OK, sure, if it’s right around the corner then.”

As soon as we had finished putting up the luggage, instead of joining me in an official reception room, as I had expected, Zachariah led us into the main Dormatorium, where Ben-Ankara’s citizenry resided. We convened on typical iron beds, each one of us, Zachariah, Frederik and myself, setting at about equal level from the ground.

“Would you like some refreshments?” I hesitated. “Only purified water and the best turkey and chicken, I assure you...”

“Alright then...”

“You are, perhaps, a little uncomfortable with the way you have been received so far...”

“Oh, no, sir, not at all, I realize that your governing style is a little un-orthodox, but...”

“I know you are used to a much more dignified reception at the other settlements, and have probably never been received in a common Dormatorium before. I mean no disrespect. But, you must understand, I have always conducted official business here, in full view of the people whom our decisions will directly affect; I think it is only right that they should know and understand what is going to happen to them. And this will not change when I become patriarch.”

“I see, sir. I don’t find it disrespectful at all.”

Such was my first encounter with Patriarch Zachariah. I didn’t have many others. In fact, I am afraid that much I record here about him is gathered from other sources. I did not have quite the significant part in this history as I did in the last one; it need be told all the same.

Other than myself, two other dignitaries would arrive for the Investiture: Patriarch Hezekiah, of Ben-Hadath, and Patriarchess Deborah, of Ben-Atali. I remembered that Hezekiah was very close to the new Patriarch, since his childhood, and had been a major

influence on him. Eager to meet him, I asked the Patriarch-designate if I could be present when he was to meet with Hezekiah. He freely assented.

The Patriarchal carriage arrived in the early morning, just as dawn was giving way to day, for Hadath was not very far north of Ankara; I guess that Zachariah felt better prepared this morning than he had the night before, so he was now able to receive Hezekiah with all the pomp and ceremony he had denied myself. Not that that I was jealous.

“Hail, Politeia!”

“Hail, Politeia,” the old man beamed at the younger as he alighted from his carriage.

“Identify!” Zachariah’s voice was so intimate that it was almost a mock formality.

“I am Hezekiah I-351830, Patriarch of Ben-Hadath. Identify!”

“I am Zachariah I-042220, Patriarch of Ben-Ankara.”

“Not just yet, you aren’t”

“I think I’ll make it through the ceremony, if only because of you.” Zachariah glanced behind his shoulder, as if I had just occurred to him “This is Klinias of the Commission on Agricultural Disputes. He’s here representing the central government for the Investiture.”

“Good to meet you, though I think we have been introduced before. That salmonella scare a few years back, wasn’t it?”

“I believe we did meet, sir, though I’d forgive you if you don’t remember me, that was a case I’ve tried hard to forget also.” Hezekiah chuckled as the Patriarch-designate formally led us to a reception chamber.

“Forgetting your principles already?”

“How do you mean?”

“Just yesterday you said that you would conduct all your official business in the Dormatorium, in full view of your subjects.”

“Yes, but my friends will understand this exception. They know that when I meet with someone like Hezekiah it isn’t exactly ‘official’ business.”

We settled into our chairs in the reception chamber and Zachariah was humble enough to serve us both some drinks and bread from the West Country.

“So, you’ve known Patriarch Zachariah for a long time?”

“‘Patriarch Zachariah’? That’s going to need a little getting used to! But, yes, I’ve known him ever since he graduated to iron when he was but seven years old and came out here to learn agricultural work. He was so afraid when he first arrived. Never been out of the city. But I don’t want to take credit for his accomplishments.” Zachariah evinced a slow, knowing grimace.

“Oh, I...I think you had a greater influence than you appreciate. I learned more from you than just the practical subjects like sowing, reaping, animal husbandry and all that. You taught me what it really means to lead people, not just in farming, but also in life. You taught me how to solidify a community...make us all work hard for a common cause.”

“Well, he, yeah... It’s true, you know, people are more productive when they *want* to be, when some one can make them realize that what they are doing is for a greater purpose, a cause, and that that cause is theirs. But I don’t think you needed *me* to tell you that.”

Zachariah nodded thoughtfully and paused.

“Administrator Klinias, I believe Patriarchess Deborah will be arriving in a moment. If you don’t mind, could you please go over to the hailing station, and greet her for me when she comes?”

“No trouble at all, Patriarch.”

I stepped out into the warm Provincial summer, but Deborah was not to arrive for another few hours. After half an hour of idleness, I began to get bored. Since I knew the Patriarchess wouldn’t be coming for a while, and that Zachariah knew this as well, I strolled on over to a bronze blacksmith shop - not unusual here, as the irons agricultural implements were in need of constant maintenance. My eyes casually perused the shop spying the usual hammers, sickles and plows, until my eyes caught a singular long stemmed object. The more I looked at it, the more unusual it seemed. Too small to be a plow it had a long blade, both sides sharpened, but the lower area was dull, like a handle. As I stood there meditating on the object, I could not for the life of me come to realize the purpose it would serve here. When the bronze wasn’t looking, I stealthily took the blade, and hid it under my robes. I attached it to an interior belt I had in there, so no one would notice my theft.

After another hour had passed, I ventured to return to the door of the reception building. I was about to knock and ask to be let back in, but the sound of Hezekiah and Zechariahs voices behind the door made me pause for a moment.

“Mistakes were made, Zach. I... I really can’t apologize enough for what happened to you. From the bottom of my heart...”

“I understand, Hezekiah. But it was such a shock ... for a child of that age, I didn’t know what to make of it...has anything like this ever happened before? Since?”

“There have been a few reports, yes. But most people remain silent.”

CHAPTER 3

“So, how do you feel about the new Patriarch?” Diotima’s voice rang clearly in an otherwise silent Chamber of Agricultural Disputes.

"I got basically the same impression meeting him as I got reading his background material." Silence again.

"Do you think we will have any difficulty with him? Particularly in respect to his feeling on the metropole/settlement relationship?" That was the question.

"Frankly, he seemed very eager to show off his egalitarianism. He takes his rhetoric quite seriously. However, he didn't do or say anything overtly hostile to the central government." Quiet again filled the room.

"So you think he is someone the government can work with? To ease dissatisfaction in Provincia." There it was again. My chance.

"Yes, I do. He has done nothing to make me think otherwise." Fool. Damn fool.

"Do you have anything else to add?" My mind filled with emptiness. "Any other comment about what you observed in Ben-Ankara that you wish to share with us..."

"...no. Nothing of interest."

"Alright then. If that's your report, then I believe we are finally informed enough to determine Zachariah's trustworthiness. Thank you for your time. You are dismissed."

I knew exactly where I had to go. I didn't know that I couldn't trust Zachariah, but I did know that I couldn't trust the strange object I was hiding inside my robes. There was only place I could go to find out what this thing was. I left Politeia Square and went up the stairs to one of the higher levels of sidewalks. Politeia was a vertical city, you must remember. It was a long distance, but my journey seemed quick enough; I voyaged up and down the flights of stairs, passed the bridges three, five, six stories above ground level until I had finally come to a place that seemed almost like a different city – Bronzenborg.

A completely different smell filled the air; not the clean anti-septic scent of Politeia Square, but a rich combination of odors from the burning flames, the sparks of welding metals, perspiration of laborers. The world around me hummed to the noise of hammers and saws and chains -- all the instruments of an industrial symphony. This was where the bronzes were assigned; this was where every useful tool and product in Politeia was created. And here, if anywhere in the world I knew, was where I could find the meaning behind the object I found in Ben-Ankara.

I gravitated over to a shop marked ECES No. 1933. It was a familiar place to me. Inside the pungent shop, the front room was covered with various schematics and plans; experimental contraptions that the engineers hoped the gods would let them build. One particularly outlandish poster was marked "The Inside-chamber combustion machine. Benz" As I waited patiently in the front room two workers busied themselves with an odd looking device, completely ignoring my presence.

"Wolfram, I need you to point the shaft away from the wall!"

"But I thought you said it needed to be aimed somewhere where it wouldn't hurt anyone."

"Exactly. You don't want us busting a huge hole in the building do you?"

Wolfram turned to me for some reason, and began to explain excitedly how his device worked.

“You see, sir, we have put a small projectile inside that rounded pipe. When we light this fuse here at the end it will cause the powder inside to burn, pressuring the air out of the shaft and forcing the projectile out.” He proudly lighted a small string at the end. BANG! The small metal ball zoomed throughout the office, bouncing off the cement walls and finally ricocheting into a chest of drawers, which promptly imploded with a crash.

“What in the name of the Doctrine just happened!?” A rather irate looking supervisor appeared in the doorway.

“Gottfreid and I were just testing the experimental projectile launcher, sir, and...”

“Experiment somewhere else! Its bad enough I still have to defend you making that useless piece of junk with out it wrecking the entire city.” The supervisor looked over and noticed me. “Hey Klinias, why didn’t you say something?”

“I was too busy dodging the projectile.”

“Eh, don’t worry ‘bout it. Nothing like that’s ever goin’ into production any way. Come on down to my office. We’ll talk.” I took a seat in the other room, which looked exactly like the first one except with a desk in it.

“So what brings you over to our humble little local of the Experimental and Creative Engineering Service?”

“This, Rudolf,” I took out the blade. “I found it in a blacksmith shop in Ben-Ankara. I’ve never seen anything like it, and can’t think of an ordinary use.”

Rudolf took the blade by what he instinctively knew was a handle, and positioned it opposite himself – instinctively testing it, in that occult knowledge that engineers have, trying to determine the tools usefulness.

“Could possibly be a reaper...but its not designed to do that effectively. So I don’t think it was designed for that at all.” He pointed it, stabbing the air. “The Transport Bureau has something like this for their horses. But this is far too big.”

“You think it could be some kind of weapon?”

“Hey Adolf! Adolf’s our weapons guy. Adolf!” A slightly thinner man came into the office.

“You call me, boss?”

“Yeah, what do make of this? Think it could be a weapon?” Adolf took the blade in hand, and started to play with it, in a slightly different fashion than Rudolf.

“If it is a weapon, it ain’t any kind the PIMF use...lighter.” He swooshed it around. “More versatile. Could get into a lot of places on an opponent that a regular razor either couldn’t do, or do it slower...and probably easier to make.” Adolf looked us both in the eye some how “Yeah, I think it’s probably a weapon. But not with defense in mind like our razors, but offensive.” Adolph looked at the blade again, a kind of envy showing in his eyes. “Kind pissed off I didn’t think of it.”

“Why do you think it was in a blacksmith shop in Ben-Ankara?”

“Don’t know. Could be someone had off time, you know, wanted to experiment with the craft a bit... but uh, usually, those types of people are sent to us. Don’t mean to brag, but it’s the ECES that has all the more creative bronzes. Out in the sticks is where you repair stuff... make the same thing over and over again. Very uncreative”

“Can you tell me if any of you schematics or plans were sent over there?”

"If you think there's some trouble out there, why are you coming to us?" I didn't say a word, but Rudolf knew my answer already.

"Alright. I'll see what I can find out, some ones bound to have come up with this design before, we'll look into the archives ...see if anyone from Ben-Ankara has been snooping through there for ideas."

"It may also be a good idea to see if anyone from ECES has been demoted or sent over there recently. As you said, the bronzes that are assigned to Provincia are not typically people who design new products."

"You know that ain't my department...but, ah, I'll see what I can do"

"What's wrong, Klinias?"

"Huh?" I lifted my head up from my plate to respond to Diana. It was Noon Meal Hour.

"You haven't said a word since you sat down. Is something wrong over at CAD?"

"Hhhmm, no, no...I can't say any one thing is wrong, I just..."

"He's just gotten back from Provincia," Cassandra piped in. "Was it something that happened there?"

"Everything went fine at Ben-Ankara. Zachariah was respectful, charismatic, well-liked by the people, loyal to the High Council..."

"So what's wrong? He sounds like everything that CAD and the HC could ask for."

"I just don't know if I trust him. He seems so...eager, to show how much of a man of the people he is. How humble he is. Even led off the carriage horse himself."

"There is nothing wrong with showing respect to the Institutions," Cassandra responded "Or showing how much you are willing to serve your fellow Politeians."

"Its not just that. I found this strange tool, this...object in the Ben-Ankara blacksmith shop. I, well, I took it and had it examined by the guys down at the ECES. They say it could be a very expertly designed weapon."

"How many of these did they have?" Diana asked seriously.

"I saw just the one."

"So you're getting upset because you found one mysterious object in Ben-Ankara, one that you stole?" She had a point.

"There is more to it than that. You're right, you're right that what I have against him right now is minuscule. If I went to the CAD with this - accuse their great white hope of disloyalty -- first of all they'd have some kind of retribution in store for me, in any case, for finding it out, there're sadistic like that; secondly, if Zachariah turns out to be clean, they'll hold me personally responsible if anything, *anything* goes awry in our relationship with him – claim that I insulted him or some BS like that!" The girls just looked at me for a moment, after that out burst of pent up frustration.

"So...what are you going to do?" For the first time, that question really dawned on me.

"I need evidence, extensive background on Zachariah and what he's been doing, not just the stuff that the Bureau of Personnel handed out. I need information from BUD, to see what kind of materials and engineering expertise he has been requesting, educational records..."

“No, no, Klinias, I see where you are going with this and I am not going to be a part of it. Too many favors are traded in Politeia. There are too many networks of contacts spread through the Agencies, each with their own agendas and goals, never concerned with the common good. Listen becoming pregnant... it's made me look at the world differently, Klinias -- I want my child to grow up in a Politeia that works as it should -- all the people working simultaneously and concertedly for the good of all. Klinias, you're my friend, and I know you think what you are doing is right, but if I help you then I'm just another part of the problem. I'm sorry.” Diana took her tray and left the table. After hearing Diana's speech, Cassandra wasn't interested in the venture either.

I had to look for help in other places.

The sky was so gray I could hardly tell where the clouds ended and the cityscape above me began. It was cool that evening, for summer; I didn't see a lot of people milling around; all I could hear was the beating of the waves against the docks nearby. What relation these facts had to my actual surroundings that day, I may never know. I just stood there; again caught between imperative and inaction. Finally, there was nothing to lose... I picked up my arm and brazenly knocked at the colossal door. Though I wanted to be answered, for that moment, I fervently hoped to be ignored. Then the situation would be decided; I would have done everything I could, but was unsuccessful in fulfilling my goals for lack of co-operation. I could then flee back to the RF without fear of cowardice.

But no such luck. My meager request was answered by a somewhat surprised looking little porter, who dutifully asked what I was doing there.

“I would like to see former Chairman Archonos, if I could.”

“You mean 14th member Archonos, High Administrator for Waterworks and Public Utilities. Who is asking for him?”

“Klinias S-112263. He knows me.” The attendant looked at me sourly for a moment.

“I will see what I can do. Wait here.” The door closed, and I stood patiently on the portico, resigned to my fate. Fate returned in about ten minutes.

“Enter, Klinias. You will follow me to Counselor Archonos' chambers.” It was different plunging into that vale of darkness this time. No longer were we a white bubble floating up through the shadows; now, for some reason, light and dark mingled together the whole journey, as if the building were in an eternal dusk.

Soon, I was left at Archonos' apartment, present by my own volition this time, more terrified than ever if only for that fact.

“Come in Klinias, I know you are out there,” humbly, I entered the apartment.

“What is it that you have come all this way to visit me for?”

“Well, sir, I was wondering how...how you have been faring the last few months.” Forgetting any shred of protocol I took a stool by his.

“I have fared...as well as could be expected. Hmmph, you know, you are the very first person to visit me, silver or otherwise, since I resigned my chairmanship -- other than those who have come on official business. I don't mean to question your concern, Klinias, but I do not think you have come here simply to inquire of my health and well-

being.” Archonos grinned and turned towards me. “Not that I blame my fellow counselors for their inattention. I have been very inattentive these last weeks and months. Hardly been to any of the Council meetings. Taking just a perfunctory interest in that new office they gave me...don’t even remember what it was called...”

“High Administrator for Waterworks and Public Utilities,” I stupidly reminded him, and quickly adding “All of our duties are impo...”

“Its just somewhere they put me, Klinias.” He looked out his window to the sea again. “Ahh...but, really, thank you for coming, in any event. Which brings us back... you are the first person to have interest in me -- since my abdication -- significant enough to actually show it. Why have you come to see me today?”

“Well, sir...at the, at the detention facilities, you said you were very grateful for my accompanying you. And if...if there was any thing I ever needed, I should come to you, sir. I don’t mean to take advantage...”

“Don’t worry, Klinias. I opened myself up to a debt, and now you see fit to collect on it. But a person of your experience, doubtless, has scores of contacts he could trade favors with. The fact that you would come to speak with me about it, that you would beg a favor from one who was, formerly at least, the most powerful man in Politeia, suggest that what ever it is you are about to ask of me concerns something very important. Something none of your usual contacts could achieve, or achieve well. What is it?”

“There is a new Patriarch in Ben-Ankara. I do not have enough evidence, sir, to conclusively prove that he has ...well, non-beneficial designs on the peace of Politeia. But I have found some objects in his settlement, that I believe are weapons of innovative design, and, furthermore, he has had some strange communications with Patriarch Hezekiah, that I found troubling.”

“Stranger than you know. Yes, I am aware of Zachariah, and his unusual ideas. You are right to suspect that there is more to him than has yet been seen. What exactly do you wish me to do concerning him?”

“Well, sir, I brought one of the objects to the ECES to see if it could be a weapon, and they said it probably was. I asked if any ECES people had been sent out there, or demoted, or in any otherwise...that this could get into Ben-Ankara and also what kinds of materials he has been importing recently and also records pertaining to his background and...”

“A good, loyal patriot to the end. Thinking of the well being of you fellow citizens, even when you have the greatest of opportunities for yourself. You will have all that you ask.”

CHAPTER 4

Time passed and I heard only silence from my esteemed “contact”. He could have turned me down, for any number of reasons, but instead he had left me with an opaque answer and then disappeared. Finally I unofficially ended my little quest with a sigh of relief. Once again I could resign myself, and Politeia, to our fate with out a blemished conscience. Being snubbed by him was a shining example of how I had attempted, to the fullest of my abilities and resources, to perform my duty to Politeia, and failed due to factors outside my control. This comforted me.

Despite my blissful impotence, I still kept a close eye on events in Ben-Ankara. I took to writing brief notes and synopsis from what I heard on the news platforms:

“Zachariah has again called for a meeting with the HC to discuss a reappraisal of the metropole/settlement relationship. On this time, the High Council relented, and scheduled a conference. ‘Zachariah proclaimed this a great victory for the Provincial people, and further evidence that real change can be made legally and in the context of the Institutions.’...

[the news proclaimers words, from memory] “The Provincial-metropolitan conference ended again in stalemate today, as the negotiating parties could not reach a consensus over proposals for reforming the distribution of goods... The High Council reiterated the longstanding Institutional precedent that the services it provides to Provincia – housing, education, the PIMF, etc – are the payment for Provincial agricultural products sent to the metropole. Zachariah insist on the creation of a standard exchangeable medium, to be provided to the Provincians on delivery of their products, and then traded for whatever goods they select.”

“In an unexpected move today, maverick Provincial leader Zachariah has called a convention of the heads of the twelve major settlements. At the expected convention Zachariah hopes to form a common front of the Provincial leadership to exert more pressure on the High Council to accept his proposals.”

The Politeian people had mixed opinions on Zachariah -- when they had opinions about him at all. Some took the situation at face value – a new populist leader in Provincia, trying to improve the lot of the irons. Then some felt that Zachariah was a revolutionary, out to destroy us all, and that the HC should do something about him, quick. Still others, more informed, sensed that the predicament was a little more nuanced – Zachariah got away with far more than the HC would usually allow. Then he would always go back to his loyalist rhetoric. For them, Zachariah was either a skillful politician, playing radical and moderate sides against each other to advance his agenda, or a metropolitan sponge, playing revolutionary to absorb discontent in the settlements.

The only time I was even a little surprised by this soap opera was when the conference negotiations broke down, and the “convention” was called. I had supposed that the delays of the High Council and the feigned high drama of the conference was the main stage on which the central government was to play its act – pretending to be beaten

into submission by their hand-picked champion of the oppressed. And Zachariahs' ideas about "standardized exchangeable medium" bordered on the absurd. I had never heard of such a thing in all my studies of Politeian history. It was, ironically, this precise issue I was researching in the Librarium when I was interrupted by Archonos' delayed response.

"Sir, if you will, two people have come to the front desk, and are asking for you to meet them."

"Alright Quintilian, I'll be there in a second."

"Um...sir, I don't think they will wait for you. They want to speak with you immediately."

"Xenophon again. Ignoring me forever, then randomly ordering me back to CAD for five minutes..."

I put my down book, and followed Quintilian through the labyrinthine stacks until we reached the reception desk. After a short moment of uncertainty I realized that my PIMF detail was absent, and that the two gods standing stoically by the desk had been awaiting my arrival.

"Hail Politeia. I am Kronos, and this is Rhea. We are from the ISD."

"ISD? What do want with...I mean, Hail Politeia..."

"We are here to escort you to the Cathedral of Doctrinal Studies. Please follow us."

Without a further syllable, they turned their backs and began to glide out of the Librarium.

The highest position in the Doctrinal hierarchy was the Supreme Vicar of the Expounderhood of Politeia. He represented the Expounderhood at all formal ceremonies, festivals, and before the High Council. The Vicariate was responsible for all the day-to-day activities of the Palaces and the Expounders. But many often wondered about the role of the Institute for the Study of the Doctrine. It was supposed to be a simple research center, but its power over Doctrinal interpretation gave it potentially, extraordinary influence within the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Perhaps, a dominant influence. I didn't know. Few did. However, my familiar surroundings swiftly disappeared behind me, as the carriage Kronos and Rhea had brought raced through Politeia, finally arriving at a lonely steeped building on the very edge of the city.

It was strange walking into that Cathedral for the first time. Somehow the building seemed to be filled by its own emptiness. Yet it wasn't empty. Row upon vacant row of pew waited patiently in front of the magnificent dais. As I kept looking upwards the dais never stopped, but continued, into the organ pipes and carved wooden figures, until it ended near the pinnacle of the Cathedral. As I was looking my head turned toward the left, and I noticed the stain glass windows on the east wall.

The first one showed, rather crudely, a man with a kind of circle or mark about his head and eyes, indicating that he was wise and intelligent. The next panel showed how he saw injustice in the land: the better people being brought low, the baser having power. He sees the suffering that is caused when people were in a place that was contrary to their nature. Already I could tell that this was the story of Legaus Donatius. By the fourth panel he has gathered a group of youths about him, those with the right nature to understand him. On the fifth he is being persecuted by the rulers of his homeland -- people who, as Legaus Donatius saw, had debased, iron, natures, and were not worthy to rule.

Half way down the cathedral, I was awed by the sixth panel -- a great ship going west across the sea taking Legaus and his followers to a new land; on the seventh Legaus and his followers had finally landed in an isolated cove -- Politeia and Provincia. On the eighth they were busy constructing the city and setting up the rudiments of the Institutions. By the last, which I took to represent the present day, the City governed by the Institutions derived from the Doctrine was running smoothly, everyone in his or her right place, in a position that was suited to them. And at the edge of the window, a curious little aside, there was a group of people in what I took to be this cathedral, looking intently on the city. A hand touched me by the shoulder.

“Klinias?”

“Yes?”

“I am Nestor, Abbot of the Cathedral of Doctrinal Studies. Chairman Archonos instructed us to send for you.”

“W-why?”

“He did not say, explicitly, but he requested that we allow you access to all our archives and libraries. Obviously you are engaged in some kind of important research; *very important* for him to have made such a request. But first, please, let me show you our cathedral -- it is not often that we have visitors.” He turned around and extended his arm, gesturing “This as you might have guessed, is our Chapel. We meet here for the Wednesday Expounding, of course, and also deliberate on our projects here at the Lesser Ecclesia...”

I followed Nestor through the length and breadth of the great complex, trying to keep up with him, both physically and intellectually. I was shown libraries, archives, cafeteriums, etc. but it is all a blur in my memory next to one great discovery: the Garden of the Fallen! The real Garden of the Fallen -- where every Politeian of the past had ended his life's journey -- where I knew I would end mine some day ... it was not what I had expected; but, then again, I had never known quite how to picture it. It truly was a garden with dense trees, bushes and vines. There were even some fruit bearing plants, which provided extra sustenance to the brothers and sisters. It was hard to believe that such a place existed in the very midst of urban Politeia, or that it was completely hidden from the cities' denizens. And yet it was, behind the thick cement walls.

Being in the Garden of the Fallen was itself an amazing experience, but I was unprepared for the shock that awaited me in its central plaza. At first I thought it was a man, another brother tending the Garden, but as I got closer, I realized that he wasn't moving; in fact, he was unhumanly still. Nestor grinned at the awe in which I held the object. After staring at the visage for more than a minute I slapped myself for not realizing what it was – a man of stone! A whole human likeness formed out of cement! Nestor laughed and told me that this was the likeness of Legaus Donatius, preserved for centuries by the ISD. It was one of the strangest moments of my life, looking at that sculpture, and seeing a face staring back at me, like a man in every detail. It was something the likes of which I had never seen, before or since. The Second Book of Nomoi strictly prohibits realistic human representations, but apparently the Brothers were allowed this exception.

CHAPTER 5

While I was away the next few weeks on my reverie in the Cathedrals archives, ominous events were taking place in Provincia. After discovering a “metropolitan-collaborationist conspiracy” against Zachariah’s rule, his followers mounted a “Peoples Revolution” that expelled the PIMF garrison as well as any other silver from Ben-Ankara. The Executive Board was dissolved and replaced with a “Revolutionary Committee”— which was effectively the same body, but purged of “collaborationists”. On the day of the uprising Zachariah proclaimed the Doctrine obsolete, and that it was no longer the guiding ideology in Ben-Ankara. Now, he said, the people had taken their destinies into their own hands, and had conceived an ideology that was Provincian in origin and that would serve the interest of the people of Provincia -- not their metropolitan and collaborationist exploiters.

This ideology was called “the Revolution” and it expressed itself practically through the “Revolutionary Structures”. As Patriarch Zachariah explained it, implementing the Revolutionary Structures in all spheres of Ben-Ankaran society was a spontaneous act of the masses to take control over their resources and use them for their collective good. While Zachariah undoubtedly had wide support among the irons, it was believed by many that the Revolutionary Structures were formulated by Zachariah himself, and that he, and his Revolutionary Guards, imposed these strictures on Ben-Ankara with little popular input. The Revolutionary Structures, as the name implies, were meant to reorganized Provincian society and economy in line with Patriarch Zachariah’s Revolution. Revolutionary cells were set up to supervise and govern every aspect of Ben-Ankaran life; for instance, there was a cell governing the administration of the local RF, for separate agricultural tasks, education, etc. The members and officers of these cells were elected by their constituents in each endeavor, but reported to the Revolutionary Committee and were charged with “rooting out all vestiges of oppression and collaborationism” -- which effectively meant it was an avenue for Zachariah and his clique to maintain control over the people of Ben-Ankara.

It was never Zachariah's intention that his Revolution would be for Ben-Ankara alone; the Revolution was an instrument for all humanity to create a truly non-oppressive social relationship, the final liberation of man. As long as any settlements nearby, or Politeia itself, continued to have oppressive power structures, there would be elements trying to destroy him, and his example. So Zachariah immediately tried to spread the Revolution to the neighboring settlements. Patriarchess Deborah of Ben-Atali was Zachariah's first, and most enthusiastic, foreign convert. She, and a sympathetic majority on the Executive Board, announced their own Peoples Revolution just days after Ben-Ankara's. Ben-Shetal followed within a week, the population overthrowing their Patriarch and some of their EB. The last remaining loyalist hold-out in southern Provincia was Patriarch Hezekiah's Ben-Hadath.

It was in this troubled climate that the 1st Convention of the Revolutionary Governments of Provincia met that summer in Ben-Ankara; but it was a Ben-Ankara that had changed profoundly since I had visited it. All remaining silver settlers or administrators had fled. Many irons had symbolically ripped their red robes, or added a black Z symbol to it on their breast or shoulder. Some hung them up like banners, again emblazoned with a stylized Z. The familiar Politeian salute was gone, replaced with a Revolutionary clenched fist. Every effort had been made to efface the old order in the minds of the people. The Emblem that had once stood so proudly at the entrance of the settlement had been taken down -- its harmonious metal rings hammered into three straight lines, smelted, and cooled; a new emblem emerged now from the cauldron, a new sign, for the new order: a Z for Zachariah.

The Convention was less a meeting of potentates than a celebration in honor of the achievements the Revolution had accomplished in Ben-Ankara and elsewhere. There were exhibitions of Ben-Ankara's admittedly impressive agricultural progress, seminars about how the new Revolutionary Structures worked as well as on the ideology of the Revolution. However, the Convention became most infamous for its games and music. These had always been strictly regulated by the Second Book of Nomoi; and what wasn't explicitly written down was set by unalterable tradition. Of course the old lyrics extolling the Doctrine, Legaus Donatius and all that had been replaced, but the musicians in Ben-Ankara had innovated even further: their melodies, rhythms and tone were unlike any sound ever known in Politeian air. The games were new as well. Young irons competed in boxing and spear throwing; activities traditionally reserved for PIMF bound golds and silvers.

On the final evening of the festival Zachariah and the other Patriarchs announced the formation of a new, permanent, governing body for the liberated areas of southern Provincia -- the Inter-Settlement Council of the Revolution or ISCR. And a new standing army was created to protect the "achievements" of the Revolution from foreign saboteurs -- the Jaeysh ha-Watani wa Tahiriya ha-Provincia, the National Army for the Liberation of Provincia. It would come to be known as the Heretic Army by metropolitan Politeians.

In celebration that night the assembled cadres of liberated Provincia congregated before a large red draped stage in the center of Ben-Ankara. It was not a motley crowd, but a well disciplined assembly, each delegation standing at attention under their sections' respective standard. These standards were all alike: square red flags with a black Z and the now familiar "Provincia Awake! You have nothing to lose but you Chains!" caption. The only way one could tell them apart was by the section number fastened on top of the pole, above the flag.

Under the faint glare of torchlight Zachariah and his colleagues marched ceremoniously through a narrow path in the midst of this assembly. No longer were they distinguished by the traditional red and white robes of the patriarchal office, but in red and black robes, symbolic of their new, Revolutionary, positions. Zachariah was recognizable as Chairmen of the ISCR by his black pitchfork - regalia symbolic of the humble origins of the movement. I now quote his speech verbatim:

"People of Provincia, I have come to you tonight because I have seen a great evil in my lifetime. I have seen thousands of men and women have their lives taken from them. I do not mean killed, for that is simply the destruction of life, but the actual stealing of people's lifetimes by holding them in slavery, in a system, from the very moment of their conception, until their ashes are given back to the earth. It is the system that creates us to work, like a tool, like the very iron tools from which we derive our name. What we are used for is very simple -- we are to provide subsistence to the people who rule over us.

Those for whom this system has been beneficial create scheme upon scheme to keep us from seeing the obvious. They tell us we are their equal. We are not. They tell us that we benefit from the present system. We don't. They tell us that ours is the best of all possible worlds. It isn't. Our whole mode of thinking is twisted to serve their purposes. Thus we must take care to liberate our own minds from the servile attitudes they have instilled; to liberate ourselves from the thoughts that have enslaved us.

Others have come, who claimed they would lead us out of our living death, and into a new life, a real life. But they have been false prophets at best. Joshua told us there was this wise "Higher Power" that created all things. But tell me, if this power was so benevolent, why did it create us into such a world? Why did it make us to be slaves? All Joshua ever did was go around making absurd, contradictory statements like "We must become children again" or even "Love thy enemy" *Love thy enemy!* How can such an attitude ever lead our people out of slavery? Tell me that!

No, my friends, we must not love our enemies -- we must not love those who take the fruit of our labor; who have stolen our entire lives, so that we may serve them; letting us have only enough to live so that we may serve them further! How can we love a people who through their control of the economic and cultural Institutions have kept our bodies, our minds, our very souls in bondage?!

The only way for our people to ever thrive again, is to rid ourselves of that race of leeches, that cabal of usurers and shysters who through trickery and deceit have ground our folk into their present misery. It is our duty to ourselves and to all humanity to crush the golds and the silvers, to burn metropolitan Politeia to the ground, and sow its grave with salt.

And out of the burnt ashes of Politeia, a new city will phoenix in its place. We will build a new world, a world with out exploitation, a world without domination, or even overly strenuous labor. A new world where man may no longer suffer.

All these things shall be given you, if you will but follow me. Will you follow me?" Of course the crowd ejaculated in a thunderous affirmation. "Good. In that case, I would like to introduce you to some others who wish to join us in our struggle against oppression."

Immediately a brown column appeared, seemingly from no where, and marched dignifiedly through the midst of the assembly. It was a delegation of bronzes from metropolitan Politeia, holding shovels upright at their side as a sign of solidarity with the irons. The immediate reaction was one of surprise and guarded hostility towards the traditional foe, but soon a new spirit of solidarity overcame old quarrels; they started to fraternize and embrace their comrades, spontaneously breaking out into choruses of revolutionary songs and toasting the Revolution. Zachariah was glad to see the former enemies so well reconciled.

"The exploiters have long encouraged discord to keep us suspicious and hostile to one another. They do this because they know that it is only through the unity of the oppressed of field and street, red-shirt and brown, that their stranglehold over us can be broken. Divided we are slaves to our enemies -- together, there is nothing we can't do."

CHAPTER 6

Though I had been "officially" been sent to the Cathedral to research the crisis in Provincia access to the ISD archives allowed me to gain a fuller perspective on many aspects of Politeian history, and I frequently go off topic. In fact, ironically, I became so immersed in other subjects that I nearly forgot about Zachariah all together. One thing I found particularly interesting at the Archives was the apparent lack of first hand historical documents before 5700 AF. After that date, which has no particular importance in Politeian history, I could find hundreds of records, Council minutes, news archives, etc. But before that date, I found steadily fewer and fewer primary sources for the next 5700 years, until the elaborate Foundation Narratives. Despite all my reading in the Politeian Library, this had never occurred to me until I was able to examine the Archives in detail.

Always accompanying me in my research, and in my pleasant walks through the fertile Cathedral grounds, was the sweet music of the brothers and sisters of the ISD choir. Their sweet odes to the Doctrine were so beautiful, it is a shame they were heard by so few. I remember one of their favorite choruses:

And imagine a place with no reward
It is easy if you try
No need for struggle or hardship
Everything just right
And imagine a place with no nations
I wonder if you can
No one different from his brother.
Unity of Man.
And imagine no possessions
I sincerely hope you can
Nothing to work or try for
Nothing to tempt your hand.

It was a beautiful, melodic song, though I never really contemplated its full meaning. Despite my many discoveries in the Archives, my greatest revelation was in the Chapel. One evening, just as dusk was settling in, I had retired from the Archives building and was making my way through the labyrinthine Garden to the small apartment the ISD had generously lent me, when I noticed something peculiar. The lights were shining in the Chapels stained glass windows, and there was an unusual lack of silence coming from that building.

This wouldn't have been so odd had I not become so attuned to the rhythms of daily life here at the Cathedral. The comings and goings, the schedules and activities of the Brothers and Sisters, they were all a clockwork machine. No element was ever out of sync, without a good reason. As I subtly advanced closer, just to get a better look, I realized that the buzzing noises around the Chapel were the mumbling of a crowd of Brothers and Sisters. A large crowd. I knew that I was going to lose the hospitality of my hosts, if I was caught, but curiosity got the better of me, and I entered the Chapel through a back door into a storage closet. There was a small hole in the wall through which I could see most of the proceedings.

The Chapel was brimming with yellow robes. Every pew was filled to its capacity, while each aisle, other than the center one, was crowded by golds standing shoulder to shoulder. It was as if the entire membership of the ISD had convened there, and it probably had. Every participant had their yellow hood up, and was wearing a golden mask, shielding their faces. Ceremoniously a Brother walked up to the pulpit, struck a mallet, and began...

"Silence, silence...brothers. I will now bring this meeting of the Greater Eklesia to order." The gathering immediately gave him silence.

“Thank you. As you all know, grave events have taken place in Provincia; events which urgently demand our attention. But first, even in the midst of such emergencies, we must honor the sacred, ancient traditions of this hallowed Eklesia. Bring him forth!” Immediately the door at the rear of the hall burst open, and two Brothers, also in masks and hoods, ran through the central aisle, carrying the form of a half naked young man between them. I couldn’t see clearly from my vantage point, but he seemed to be about the age of graduation into citizenship. The master of ceremonies took a large golden razor, and held it at the back of the man’s neck.

“Are you Aristocles G- 031933?!”

“Y- yes... sir,”

“What is the greatest good?”

“The form of the Good”

“And how may man come to know the form of the good?”

“He must become the form of the good person”

“And how can he become that?”

“If it is governed by the best laws”

“And what are the best laws?”

“The Institutions”

“And from what are the best laws derived”

“The best thinking”

“And what is the best thinking”

“The Doctrine”

“And how can the Institutions be administered?”

“The ones with the best knowledge of them must be the rulers”

“And who has the best knowledge of them?”

“The Institute for the Study of the Doctrine”

“Aristocles G-031933, you have the honor of being found to have one of the purest golden characters in the history of Politeia, and thus in the history of Man. This mask was yours since your birth, but only now do we know that you are indeed one of us. Come and join your brothers and sisters.” The crowd broke out in applause as the man was given his hooded robe and mask, and took his place among his assembled brethren.

But soon the excitement wore down, and the mood grew more solemn. “Now, to the business in Provincia. Patriarch Zachariah has taken up the arms that the central government has given him, and has used them to revolt against Politeia. I am sure many here will trace this tragedy to the decision to allow Herata to be elected chairlady. While many of our brothers and sisters no doubt regret this decision, may I remind all present that when we discussed this last we did come to a consensus... that because Herata not only was next in line to Archonos by age, but that as General-Secretary of Education she had done an exemplary performance in assuring the minds of our youth from infancy to

graduation, of the truth of the Doctrine... that we decided the High Council would elect her as chairlady. I now recognize Brother Agesilos.”

“I do not think we should be so hard on her, Brothers and Sisters; may I remind you that the *whole* HC decided on this course of action... finding a charismatic iron, and creating a movement to counter Joshuaitism was originally Admiral Poseidon’s idea, was it not?”

“It was Poseidon’s idea, but it was the decision of Chairlady Herata to consider it, and bring it to a vote in the High Council, and it was the HC which voted 18-17, with one abstention, to pursue this course of action. Frankly, I believe we should have intervened. The Council should have voted *no*”

“This is not the place for shifting blame or for political and factional squabbles. May I remind my fellow brothers and sisters of what is written in the Third Book of Nomoi: That it is for the ISD to rule without ruling? We decide who will be appointed or elected to what office, as we have the right to do. We let the lower bodies function autonomously, each doing its function, while we decide what those functions are, and who operates them. If we were to concern our self with every administrative problem in Politeia and Provincia, it would be a waste of our great intellectual resources. Casting pearls before swine.”

“May I remind the Brothers and Sisters of the ISD that the Third Book of Nomoi also gives us oversight and veto powers? We are allowed to intervene, if we decide that what the HC or any other body is considering is un-Doctrinal or unwise. Our mission is to be the mind, the power that guides and directs all the organs of the Politeian body. Not just to decide who goes where.” The Chapel was silent again; but it was a strange kind of silence that seemed like an acknowledgement.

“Brother Chironphilogynos is right. Things are becoming far too serious to allow the HC to handle the situation by itself. I propose that we draw up a program to deal with the present danger, and that we should now determine how the High Council will vote before any major action is taken.” A rumble of agreement spread through the crowd.

“I disagree, at least partly. This is an emergency, perhaps even a military, situation. We cannot have carriages going here to Politeia Square and back at all hours of the night while we debate what to do. It would take hours just to make one simple decision. That is not wise if decisions are to be quickly made in a rapidly changing situation.” Another air of reflected agreement. The master of ceremonies re-entered the discussion.

“As we all know, the Commandantcy of the PIMF is exempt during war time. I believe we can and should leave most military decisions up to him. As for the HC and the other relevant civilian Agencies...perhaps something can be worked out.”

CHAPTER 7

The Revolution swept red and black through the hinterland to the south of the city. Fear and anxiety ran through the minds of the populace, as crowds of refugees flooded the streets and squares of Politeia. The city was at a stand still. The refugee problem made the normal operations of the Agencies impossible, while all available PIMF had to be mobilized to guard against the inevitable invasion. In their absence the urban militia had to be called up to keep order. Journeying out side the city walls was suspended, and, soon, the gates had to be completely sealed for the duration, as the metropolis could take in no more refugees, and, furthermore, it was impossible to tell which irons were friendly, and which were Zachariah's followers.

As if the population did not have enough to worry about, the events surrounding the siege of Ben-Hadath were a sobering reminder of our fate if the Revolution triumphed. What happened there was a source of intense speculation and curiosity, more talked about than any other episode of the rebellion so far, yet the least understood. All that could be said for certain is that one evening our scouts reported back that there were skirmishes between the Heretic Army and the PIMF stationed at the settlement. Commandant Pericles would not send in reinforcements, keeping his forces undivided to guard the city. The next day Politeia awoke to see a huge column of black smoke rising in the south. The city braced itself for a new wave of refugees from Ben-Hadath, but none ever came. That column stayed in the air for days, like a gigantic black flag.

The true story of how Ben-Hadath was conquered, and how that black column came to be would not be known until after the war. What follows is taken from first hand accounts by some of Zachariah's lieutenants who were eye witnesses to the event:

At dusk the Heretics launched their attack on Ben Hadath, first cutting off its exits, and then penetrating the settlement. PIMF and Provincial militia units loyal to Patriarch Hezekiah fought bravely but were severely out numbered by the Heretics. By 9:45, they had taken the town, and herded the population into large buildings – dormatoriums, cafetariums, what ever they could find - not a single Ben Hadathite was left outside these prisons, except those whom the Heretics wished to interrogate.

Patriarch Hezekiah was captured by Zachariah's henchmen and brought before Patriarch Zachariah himself at an enclosure behind the old STF. Zachariah was waiting for him there, staring pensively at the building, when his lieutenants arrived with the old man.

"I have waited 24 years for this moment. I have rehearsed, in my mind, what I would say at this moment thousands of times. It was twenty-four years ago, on this very spot, where it all started. Back then, I was in your care, Hezekiah, I was in your complete control" He walked over to Hezekiah, caressed the side of the old mans head, "And now you are in my control...completely" He balled up his fist and punched Hezekiah in the jaw; bringing the old man down to his knees.

“Please... please... I’m sorry what I did to you. I...” the old man sobbed and tried to catch his breath. He pleaded madly to Zachariah, out of fear, or guilt, or both. “I always tried to be a good mentor, the kind of man who makes a boy a man... but when I ate the unprocessed food,...without the anti-aphrodisiac, I didn’t mean to... you can’t understand what comes over people, the confusion, the...”

“*Confusion!* You dare talk to me of confusion! How would you like to be a little ten year old boy, and one day, your best friend in the whole world, your hero, takes you back here and uses you?! Huh!? Uses you for his own, sick ends?” Zachariah whacked him with the blunt side of a Razor.

“I didn’t want to! I was in a state ...I couldn’t control myself!” Hezekiah sighed, looked into Zachariah’s face, and for the first time spoke clearly “Zach, I am responsible. Once I knew I had been eating unprocessed food, when I began to feel the stirrings inside of me, I should have left. Gone into seclusion somewhere where I couldn’t hurt the people I loved. I’m sorry Zach, I’ve been sorry from the moment I ate those unprocessed apples. Do with me what you like, but don’t hurt any of the other Ben Hadathites; they did nothing to you.”

“You’re responsible, alright. You’re responsible for all of this.” He pointed to the occupied city with his razor. “You created me, and now I’m going to destroy you. So you can think of your death as a kind of delayed suicide.”

“Oh, no, Zachariah, I didn’t do this.” It was the first time there wasn’t a hint of apology in his voice or eyes. “You did this by yourself.”

“Society created me, and society, all of society will be punished for its crimes. The crimes that produced myself. You are just the part of it that awakened me. That galvanized this Revolution. You are how the system creates its own gravediggers”

“No, Zachariah. *You* choose to start this Revolution. *You* chose to occupy Ben-Hadath and have me kidnapped. And now, it is *your* choice to kill me; and if you do, the guilt will be entirely your own.”

Zachariah became enraged and whacked the old mans back with the blunt edge of the razor. He stripped him of his robes, and began to hit the crinkled form mercilessly with the sharp edge of the razor. He kept on hitting him making him bleed profusely, but avoided the vital spots, delaying the death stroke as long as possible. Finally, he took Hezekiah’s head in his hand, and looked directly in his eyes as he put the razor to the old mans throat.

“Zach, ...Za-ach...” Zachariah hesitated, blinked. Then he recovered his determination and slid the razor through the front of Hezekiah’s throat. He stared as the life slowly went out of Hezekiah’s eyes. Patriarch Zachariah stood there a moment. He

took a deep breath, and stood in silence, taking in what he had just done. Then he called to his lieutenants.

“Ba’l zebub, Ash-Atan, begin punishing them. Punish them all.” His subordinates saluted, walked to the main buildings, and began to carry out their commanders orders.

Ben Hadath burned that night. Every building in the settlement was torched. The Ben Hadathites who tried to escape their concrete ovens were met at every turn with Heretic razors or swords, as the weapon I had discovered at Ben Ankara came to be called. Those who were not burned or stabbed suffocated in clouds of smoke. Not even the young were spared.

Patriarch Zachariah slowly glided down the streets alone that night, a black shadow against the glow of the flames around him. The air was filled with the mortal screams and moaning of those trapped in the flaming buildings, unable to get out. He stopped at the end of the town, the settlement gates. And as he stood overlooking the destruction he had caused, a single tear ran down his cheek. Lt. Ba’l zebub cautiously approached.

“Everything is going according to plan, sir. Not a single escape.” Zachariah didn’t acknowledge him. Against his better judgment, the lieutenant ventured a question “I thought you loved Patriarch Hezekiah, sir.” Zachariah kept his eyes on the flames, saying in a whisper “I did.”

CHAPTER 8

“Klinias!”

“Yes, uh...Nestor?...who is it” Actually it was a Sister.

“No, it’s Sophia. Are you decent?” I was hardly awake.

“Well...” she opened the door anyway.

“Klinias, it’s been a pleasure having you as a guest. We have all enjoyed having you keep us company here, and are sad that you are leaving, but now its time for you to go. Now where’s your bags?”

I stepped out of my bed, but not out of my stupor. “I-I’m sorry... have I done something to overstay my welcome?”

“No, not at all, deary,” she was busy grabbing all my clothes, or any thing else she could find, and haphazardly stuffing it into a little satchel “No, no, we just need the Cathedral for ourselves now; emergency and all that”

“Emergency?”

“No time to converse, deary, here put on this shirt.”

She busily escorted me out through the garden and past the Chapel gates. Before I knew what was happening I was on the side walk outside of the Cathedral building, half-dressed holding my satchel. It was far from walking distance to the RF, and there wasn’t a single public carriage in sight. Dazed, I began to make my way closer to the RF, planning (in the broad sense of the term) on finding a carriage somewhere along the way. The BUTT was always willing to take in people who needed a ride.

After I had been walking for a while, and cleared my head, I began to realize that something was amiss in the city: there were no carriages going through the streets on business, there were no bronzes or silvers hurrying to their Agencies on foot. The city had been deserted by its regular inhabitants, and had been resettled by an unusually large number of irons. Irons with passes are always in the city, for one reason or another, but the types of people who had now congregated on the streets of Politeia— children, families, average farmers — these were not the type of irons who typically were granted passes for official business in Politeia. And they didn't look like they were on business but, rather, just milling around.

Finally I asked a silver, the first one I saw, why so many irons were being allowed in.

"Refugees, at least that what they call themselves. People that've come up from the south fleeing the Heretics."

"You mean this many people have abandoned Ben-Ankara because they didn't like Zachariah's rule? It's illegal for them to leave their fields. How are we even getting food from the southern settlements?" The silver looked at me with a strange mixture of confusion and irritation.

"What are you talking about? Ben-Ankara hasn't sent food shipments in over a month. Neither has Ben-Shetal or Ben-Atali. The entire southern hinterland has rebelled against the central government, and are trying to break away permanently."

"The *entire* southern hinterland has broken away? I thought they meant they were just having trouble controlling Zachariah,"

"Huh?"

"Nothing. Where can I find the nearest public carriage station?"

"You won't, all transportation has been pressed into the service of the PIMF for the duration. Where have you been?"

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you. Could you at least tell me how I could get back to my RF, I'm kind of stranded here?"

"Well, I'm with the urban militia, got called up keep an eye on things... We've set up a C&C camp a few blocks from here. I suppose I could ask my commanding officer if we could lend you one of our carriages. Which RF are you from again?"

The UM camp was a study in anxiety - people who were trained two weeks out of the year, and never thought that they would see action were now faced with a serious emergency on their home territory. Their main objective was to manage the displaced persons, looking for signs of subversion, but they also had the thankless task of keeping Politeia running -- making sure the essential Agencies kept working, escorting VIP civilian personnel, etc. Almost all PIMF units, I soon learned, were deployed outside the southern gates of Politeia, even units from north Provincia. Order was now kept in the northern Provincial settlements by an iron militia, called up like the local UM. This would mean a food shortage in the coming months — not only had production been hindered (to put it lightly) in the south, the north was short on manpower during the planting season as well. We would eat a poor harvest that winter.

What happened to me over the next few days is incidental; merely the experience of thousands of Politeian civilians – waiting anxiously in the RFs, not able to do anything about our impending fate, not able to do anything else, trying desperately to turn my thoughts away from my current predicament, until the moment finally came, almost as a relief. The Heretic Army was in sight of the gates;

The Heretic Army was a motley crew: they had let their beards and hair grow out, unwashed and dirty, without any attempt at grooming, their clothes torn and their bodies marked by innumerable little cuts which they had let bleed and clot. The blood that they carelessly left on themselves stained their bicolored robes making reddish stains on the black areas and black marks on the red ones. Zachariah had declared that normal grooming was “a metropolitan fetish” To show their absolute secession from and antipathy for humanity, their vanguard detachments placed the decaying heads of Politeian soldiers on their swords, while screaming their war call “Liberation!”

In almost diametrical contrast was the Elite Calvary Unit of Knights and Amazons, Politeia's finest military force. Personally led by Commandant Pericles, they rode out from the city gates to the cheer of the thousands of PIMF enlisted men, and tens of thousands of civilian spectators who had crowded on top of the city wall. They were clad, almost head to foot, by shimmering, shining, armor, almost as clear as a mirror, and each had a solid yellow plume on their helmet. They rode through the crowd with grace and discipline, stopping at the head of the assembled armies. Commandant Pericles knew that the city already had enough of siege, and rather than dig in and fight a defensive war. Now it was time for Politeia to finally strike back against them.

Pericles slowly took off his helmet and began to address the crowd. There were thousands present but we could all hear him clearly; the crowd fell dead silent. Even though many tens of thousands listened to that speech, many people felt as if Pericles were speaking directly to them. I was one of them. This is the text of the speech, a speech I will remember in every detail for the rest of my life:

“Knights and Amazons of Politeia, I would like, now, to say a few words to my countrymen:

“Six millennia and five years ago, our fathers crossed the sea to found a new world - both literally and figuratively. They resolved to create a new society, one that would be without the errors of the old world. A society conceived in reason and dedicated to the ideal that man can make himself better than the way he was created.

“All Politeia is, really, is that attempt to uplift mankind...to give it a new chance. And we have indeed done so, perhaps more than any other society -- but still we fall short of our goal.

“My friends, we are *not* a perfect society. Politeia is a deeply flawed nation. It is so because it is a nation of human beings, and human beings are deeply flawed. Perhaps we are victims of our own high expectations.

“Rightly or wrongly, there have always been those who have felt that they do not benefit from the Institutions as they should. And therefore, some have come to doubt the Doctrine itself.

“And then, there were times when we have been at each others throats, fighting amongst ourselves, something that the Doctrine should have prevented us from doing.

“There have been those who have said that all Politeia is a lie, that its history proves that the Doctrine and the Politeian ideal is nothing more than a sham; nothing more than a lie to keep people in place.

“But I see it differently. I would say that our history, if anything, vindicates the Politeian ideal, for it proves that Politeia can advance, that it can overcome its shortcomings, as a child overcomes its ignorance as it grows.

“And just as every man or woman has their moral principles, yet can not, and will not, ever abide them in every way, in every step of their life, so Politeia, too, must ultimately fall short of its highest aspirations. Still, we have at least sought to live by good principles.

“Our foe’s ideals are ideals of death. If not defeated he will raze our city, he will kill many of our fellow citizens, and he will burn our Tower to the ground. If he does this, then our great Doctrinal experiment will have all been for not; the dreams of ages, the work of generation upon generation for a better world will be extinguished. And your lives and lives of all those you care about will either be extinguished or mortgaged to the enemy. For this reason, above all, our kinship with the people our enemies would destroy, our capacity for good, for them, we cannot let our enemies triumph.” He raised his razor above his helmet, “For the Doctrine, and for Politeia!”

With that the Unit plunged toward the Heretic line, with Pericles at its head. The blue masses of Politeian infantry surged behind them, shouting a frenzied war cry. As the Unit collided with the Heretics, they were assaulted on all sides by the barbarian razors and swords, piercing their armor and stabbing their horses in the underbelly. What the Heretics lacked in armor or horses, they made up with in sheer ferocity. In that first charge they took a knight down from his horse and started to beat him senselessly on all sides. The knight, Marathon, resisted desperately with the trusts of his razor, killing three Heretics before finally being done in himself.

In the west, a second division of the ECU was attacking the Heretics rear. This division was led by an Amazon, who carried a long lance ahead of her to clear her path of the red clad barbarians of the south. To the east, thousands of the blue infantry were engaging the Heretics in a pitched battle to secure the bridge over Ezekiel Creek; this creek separated Heretic controlled areas from D'jibrel Pass - a route through the Hills of Michael to Ben-Jonah, the only port to the south of metropolitan Politeia. Keeping the Heretics from the pass meant stopping them from commandeering ships at Ben-Jonah to launch attacks against the city or the northern coast (it also prevented the HCs worst nightmare – the Heretics finding outside assistance). As it happened, the offensive was also useful for keeping the Heretic forces occupied trying to cross the creek, and left the vast, wild Hills of Michael unattended.

It was a sprawling, epic, awe inspiring and gruesome battle, and we all stood watching it unfold before us on the wall, as if we were watching a gigantic screen. It is impossible to really convey what we saw; for those of us who did...it can never be forgotten. I'll always remember seeing a young Amazon being dismounted by a squad of Heretics: despite her best efforts with lance and razor the Heretics had gotten under her horse and began stabbing it mercilessly. Blood poured from the poor animals' hind while it bellowed and kicked, its rider trying desperately to keep fighting while staying mounted. Eventually she did fall off her mount, and was left to her grisly fate at the hands of the Heretics. It's always worse, somehow, when it happens to a woman.

And so the fighting continued, hour after hour, into the night. What had begun as exhilaration and satisfaction against our foes, slowly turned to a tense, gutrenching suspense as we saw our troops fight the barbarians to a standstill, a standstill that remained no matter how hard we fought, or how many lives were lost. Many of us onlookers became frustrated, and we started to turn our ire on the PIMF leadership, and the HC itself. I had never heard, nor imagined I could hear, such open discontent as I heard on that wall that terrible night; all the more memorable because the Urban Guard, the government itself, would not lift a finger about it. A strange foreshadowing of what would come.

While we were beginning to divide amongst ourselves, Pericles had commenced an operation that would prove to be the turning point of the war. Under cover of night a crack infantry team, assisted by a small number of mounted ECU, slipped through the Hills of Michael, and began an all night trek behind enemy lines into the Forest of Sinai. The Heretics had left the Hills of Michael ungarrisoned because of its high elevation and rocky terrain; they believed that they couldn't make a stand there and that we wouldn't try either. Sneaking through the black, silent forest, the soldiers, personally led by Commandant Pericles, finally reached Ben-Gehanna, the rebels' base, and launched a raid on the garrison at dawn. Zachariah had sent most of his army to the front, and the home base was lightly guarded. Simultaneously with the raid, a massive infantry offensive commenced against the Heretic frontline, pushing into the forest, and keeping Ben-Gehanna from being reinforced. The war ended as suddenly as it had begun.

When the PIMF troops occupied Ben-Gehanna they found Patriarchess Deborah, the Heretics second most important leader, in bed in the chief tent where she had stayed with Zachariah. They seemed to have had some kind of personal relationship beyond their joint leadership of the rebellion; a relationship that apparently involved species propagational activities. She signed a surrender document and was interned in the State prison for the moment.

As to the fate of Patriarch Zachariah “The Light-Giver” himself, he came to a quite unexpected end. As soon as he realized that the PIMF was attacking his base, he saddled his donkey and tried to escape the battle fray. However the donkey, in its haste to speed away from the camp, slipped on a fresh turd of some kind and flung Zachariah to the ground, breaking his neck.

In the city, word of Pericles’ victory first brought suspicion, then a kind of optimism; but once it was confirmed the city exploded into spontaneous celebration, the likes of which had never been imagined. People who had been camping on the wall or sequestered in their RFs spontaneously flooded the street to welcome the returning columns of troops from the front. Confetti and flowers rained down from the highest bridges and rooftops, while the crowds gave the Politeian salute and broke out into “*Hail, Politeia, land of glory and awe, Hail, Politeia, you’re the health of us All*” I have never hear it sung that way before, nor will I ever again.

Pericles was feted as our hero and our savior, which, indeed, he was. He marched at the head of the triumphant soldiers, and when they reached Politeia Square he stopped, and made an impromptu speech to the assembled citizenry:

“People of Politeia:

You have delivered yourselves from death. You have won for your self a new life. The Revolution has now been defeated forever. Tomorrow is the first day of our second life. And I promise you now, that my commitment to the well-being of my state and my fellow citizens will be as strong in peace as it was in war. I will be the first in the charge to reform Politeia, just as I was first in the charge to save Politeia. Together, we will reform the Institutions; we will make future Revolutions, future wars, impossible!”

The crowd cheered ecstatically as they heard Pericles’ words. Everybody was joyful; every body was smiling. In fact the only unsmiling faces were those of the High Council members who were on the podium with Pericles.